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09/864,921	05/23/2001	John C. Reed	P-LJ 4752	1677

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EXAMINER

FREDMAN, JEFFREY NORMAN

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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1637

DATE MAILED: 09/15/2005

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

## Office Action Summary

**Application No.**

09/864,921

**Applicant(s)**

REED ET AL.

**Examiner**

Jeffrey Fredman

**Art Unit**

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

### Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

### Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 28 July 2005.
- 2a) ☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

### Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-5,31 and 33-35 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-5,31 and 33-35 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

### Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on \_\_\_\_\_ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

### Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some \* c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. \_\_\_\_\_.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

\*.See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

### Attachment(s)

- 1) ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)  
Paper No(s)/Mail Date \_\_\_\_\_.
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)  
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. \_\_\_\_\_.
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_.

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## **DETAILED ACTION**

### ***Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114***

1. A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on July 28, 2005 has been entered.

### ***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 101***

2. 35 U.S.C. 101 reads as follows:

Whoever invents or discovers any new and useful process, machine, manufacture, or composition of matter, or any new and useful improvement thereof, may obtain a patent therefor, subject to the conditions and requirements of this title.

3. Claims 1-5, 31 and 33-35 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 101 because the claimed invention lacks patentable utility.

The current claims are drawn to a isolated nucleic molecules encoding polypeptides comprising SEQ ID NO: 97 and DNA which hybridizes to these seuqecnes.

### **Credible Utility**

Following the requirements of the Utility Guidelines (See: Federal Register: December 21, 1999 (Volume 64, Number 244), revised guidelines for Utility.), the first inquiry is whether a credible utility is cited in the specification for use of the nucleic acid molecule which encodes SEQ ID NO: 97. The only cited utilities identified by the

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examiner is a reach through utility to use the Clan-A (SEQ ID NO: 97)(see paragraph 0028) where Clan-A is used in interactions with other Card proteins in ways that "likely influence apoptosis, cytokine processing, or NF-kB activity (see paragraph 0043 of the specification)." These utilities are credible.

Upon identification of credible utilities, the next issue is whether there are any well established utilities for the nucleic acid molecule which encodes SEQ ID NO: 97, including 15-mer fragments of SEQ ID NO: 97. No well established utilities for this nucleic acid molecule which encodes SEQ ID NO: 97 are identified in either the specification or in the cited prior art.

#### **Substantial utility**

Given the absence of a well established utility, the next issue is whether substantial utilities are disclosed in the specification. Here, there is no evidence of any substantial utility. No particular use for SEQ ID NO: 97 is found in the specification nor is there any use for any method involving SEQ ID NO: 97.

As noted in the utility guidelines, methods of treating unspecified diseases, basic research on a product to identify properties, intermediate products which themselves lack substantial utility are all insubstantial utilities (see page 6 of the Utility guideline training materials). If there were evidence of the association of SEQ ID NO: 97 with any disease state or with some other biological phenotype, this evidence might be considered regarding a substantial utility. However, no such evidence is found. In fact, the specification indicates that the Clan molecules can have opposing functions, so that some Clan molecules may trigger pro-caspase-1 activation while others may inhibit this

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activation. Further, even if the phenotype is pro-caspase-1 activation, this phenotype does not meet the requirements for a "substantial" utility since the specification provides no information on how to use such a phenotype.

Applicant's own paper supports a conclusion that there is no "real world" use, other than further investigation, for SEQ ID NO: 97. In Damiano et al (Genomics (2001) 75:77-83), Damiano states "Once their physiologic functions are uncovered, CLAN proteins may prove to be valuable therapeutic targets (see abstract)." So even Applicant, at a time later than that of the submission of this application, indicates that the physiologic functions of CLAN proteins are unknown, and they "may" be valuable targets. Of course, depending upon the physiologic function, any protein "may" be a valuable target. It is the requirement of the 35 U.S.C. 101 that the invention submitted have utility when filed, not at some indefinite time in the future when further experimentation has reached its successful conclusion.

The cited utilities of pro-caspase-1 activation or inhibition have less "real world" significance than the amount of utility found insufficient by the Supreme court in *Brenner v. Manson*, 148 U.S.P.Q. 689 (1966). In *Brenner*, a novel compound which was structurally analogous to other compounds which were known to possess anti-tumor activity was alleged to be potentially useful as an anti-tumor agent in the absence of evidence supporting this utility. The court expressed the opinion that all chemical compounds are "useful" to the chemical arts when this term is given its broadest interpretation. However, the court held that this broad interpretation was not the intended definition of "useful" as it appears in 35 U.S.C. §101, which requires that an

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invention must have either an immediately apparent or fully disclosed "real world" utility.

The court held that:

The basic quid pro quo contemplated by the Constitution and the Congress for granting a patent monopoly is the benefit derived by the public from an invention with substantial utility. . . . [u]nless and until a process is refined and developed to this point-where specific benefit exists in currently available form-there is insufficient justification for permitting an applicant to engross what may prove to be a broad field. . . . a patent is not a hunting license. . . . [i]t is not a reward for the search, but compensation for its successful conclusion.

The instant claims are drawn to polynucleotides encoding a protein (SEQ ID NO: 97) which has no identified cellular role, no particular cellular phenotype and is not associated with any disease. The function of the Clan-A (SEQ ID NO: 97) gene and its resulting protein are as yet undetermined with no known function or biological significance. Until some actual and specific significance can be attributed to the protein identified in the specification, or the gene encoding it, one of ordinary skill in the art would be required to perform additional experimentation in order to determine how to use the claimed invention. Thus, there is no immediately apparent or "real world" utility as of the filing date directly consistent with *Brenner v. Manson*. Therefore, it is concluded that the claims lack substantial utility.

### **Specific Utility**

In the current case, there is no specific utility for SEQ ID NO: 97 or methods using this sequence. No specific association of SEQ ID NO: 97 and any disease or even a specific biological phenotype is provided in the specification. The specification discusses a wide variety of phenotypes which might be influenced by Clan-A, SEQ ID NO: 97, such as cytokine processing, NF-KB activity or apoptosis (see paragraph

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0043), but does not specifically teach any use for the sequence in association with these multiple generic possibilities. Even the claims are drawn to generic utilities as shown by nonelected claim 23, where the biological process includes elements ranging from apoptosis to inflammation, cell adhesion and, most generic of all, transcription. Potentially any fragment of nucleic acid is of commercial importance to someone, but this is not specific in any way to SEQ ID NO: 97.

Finally, with regard to the utility analysis, the current situation directly tracks Example 9 of the utility guidelines, where a nucleic acid of significantly unknown function was characterized as lacking utility.

#### ***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112***

4. The following is a quotation of the first paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall contain a written description of the invention, and of the manner and process of making and using it, in such full, clear, concise, and exact terms as to enable any person skilled in the art to which it pertains, or with which it is most nearly connected, to make and use the same and shall set forth the best mode contemplated by the inventor of carrying out his invention.

5. Claims 1-5, 31 and 33-35 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, as containing subject matter which was not described in the specification in such a way as to enable one skilled in the art to which it pertains, or with which it is most nearly connected, to make and/or use the invention.

#### **Nature of Invention**

Claims 1-8 are drawn to a system and method of screening using SEQ ID NO: 97. The nature of this invention relates to nucleic acids of a particular sequence with no

other associated information. This is an invention in a subject area which is well recognized as unpredictable.

**Breadth of the claims**

The claims are drawn to a oligonucleotides which encode SEQ ID NO: 97, to fragments as small as 15 nucleotides from oligonucleotides which encode SEQ ID NO: 97 and to any sequence which will hybridize to an oligonucleotide which encodes SEQ ID NO: 97 under moderately stringent conditions.

**Amount of Guidance in the Specification**

The specification discloses the entire sequence of the SEQ ID NO: 97 and discloses one particular DNA sequence which encodes SEQ ID NO: 97, but identifies no particular use for the sequence. As noted in the utility rejection above, this utility is not found to be substantial nor specific and consequently, the specification provides NO guidance regarding how to use the oligonucleotide encoding SEQ ID NO: 97 or the broader embodiments of fragments and hybridizing oligonucleotides.

In fact, the specification indicates that "different isoforms of CLAN likely have opposing effects on pro-caspase-1 activation (see paragraph 0043)." Thus, the specification indicates that one cannot predict the function or use of the molecule based upon the sequence whatsoever. The specification here is admitting that even very closely related molecules may differ significantly in function.

**Working Examples**

There are NO working examples in which an oligonucleotide encoding SEQ ID NO: 97 is used in any assay for detection or diagnosis of any disease or any other related utility.



**Amount of Guidance in Prior Art**

As noted in the utility rejection above, the prior art provides no guidance with regard to the particular function of SEQ ID NO: 97. In fact, Applicant's own paper supports a conclusion that there is no "real world" use, other than further investigation, for SEQ ID NO: 97. In Damiano et al (Genomics (2001) 75:77-83), Damiano states "Once their physiologic functions are uncovered, CLAN proteins may prove to be valuable therapeutic targets (see abstract)." So even Applicant, at a time later than that of the submission of this application, indicates that the physiologic functions of CLAN proteins are unknown, and they "may" be valuable targets. Of course, depending upon the physiologic function, any protein "may" be a valuable target. Damiano further notes "The physiological functions of the isoforms of CLAN remain to be delineated (see page 83, column 1)." It is the requirement of the 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph that the invention submitted have utility and be enabled when filed, not at some indefinite time in the future when further experimentation has reached its successful conclusion.

**Skill in the Art**

While no evidence is adduced, the examiner believes the skill in the art would be considered high.

**Predictability of the Art**

The art in biotechnology, as relates to the association of diseases with particular genes, is highly unpredictable. The claimed sequence is currently an orphan gene. Regarding such Orphan genes, Dujon (Trends in Genetics (1996) 12(7):263-270) notes that the most striking result of yeast sequencing is that "a significant proportion of yeast

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genes are orphans of unpredictable function (abstract)". Dujon further states "We have no clue to which direction to search and, even worse, when considering the experiments that could be done on orphans, we rapidly find ourselves intellectually embedded in the schemes of the past (page 2169, column 2)." Thus, it is extremely unpredictable what to do with an orphan gene such as SEQ ID NO: 97 in the absence of any defined utility.

Further, there is an abundance of evidence that very similar proteins can perform very different functions. For example, Rost et al (J. Mol. Biol. (2002) 318(2):595-608) notes regarding assignment of enzymatic activity based upon homology comparisons that "The results illustrated how difficult it is to assess the conservation of protein function and to guarantee error-free genome annotations, in general: sets with millions of pair comparisons might not suffice to arrive at statistically significant conclusions (abstract)." Thus, even high levels of homology do not necessarily correlate with actual protein function.

So the prior art supports a finding that it is entirely unpredictable what use can be made of SEQ ID NO: 97 in the absence of any teaching in the specification.

### **Quantity of Experimentation**

An immense amount of experimentation would be required in order to define whether this protein is associated with any particular disease state. In order to acquire statistically significant evidence of an association with a disease or other utility, dozens of patients in each of the many hundreds of different possible disease states would need to be subjected to collection of samples for analysis of their DNA, followed by analysis and the inventive efforts of determining if any association exists. This is a very large quantity of experimentation.

**Determination**

In view of the unpredictable nature of the invention, the absence of any guidance in the specification for a substantial and specific use, the absence of any working examples in the specification, the negative teachings in the prior art, the extreme unpredictability of the invention, and the large amount of experimentation necessary balanced against the high level of skill in the art and the relatively narrow breadth of the claims, it is concluded that undue experimentation would be required to use this invention as claimed.

***Response to Arguments***

6. Applicant's arguments filed February 2, 2005 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

**Utility**

Applicant repeatedly argues that the utility of CLAN-A is that it can trigger pro-caspase-1 activation by the "induced proximity" mechanism and cites page 16 of the specification. However, THIS IS NOT TRUE. The argument does not correctly describe the teaching of the specification. The Applicant never identifies support in the specification for the statement that CLAN-A can trigger pro-caspase-1 activation, but rather makes the generic statement that "Another characteristic of the invention CARD-containing polypeptides is that they can associate with pro-caspases, caspases or with caspase-associated proteins, thereby altering caspase proteolytic activity. (see page 16, lines 14-18)." So contrary to Applicant's argument that some sort of specific use is contemplated for CLAN-A at page 16, no such use is cited. Rather, the specification generically discloses a function imputed to CARD domains, but with absolutely no

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evidence that CLAN-A has this function. In fact, the specification itself disputes this utility, noting that "different isoforms of CLAN likely have opposing effects on pro-caspase-1 activation (see paragraph 0043)."

To the extent that the specification states the caspase activation as a function for Clan-A, this assertion is rebutted by the Damiano reference, which is POST-filing date art and which expressly indicates that these functions of Clan-A are not certain but at best, indicative. Damiano expressly states that "the physiological functions of the isoforms of CLAN remain to be delineated." So this means that AFTER applicant filed this application, the applicant stated that the physiological functions of isoforms, such as Clan-A, were still unknown. This demonstrates a lack of utility and enablement. Applicant attempts to argue that this specific evidence is rebutted by generic, unspecified discussion in the specification. So there is no expectation whatsoever that CLAN-A will necessarily function to trigger caspase activation, even based upon the teachings of the specification itself.

Applicant then cites a series of generic utilities, relevant to any nucleic acid whatsoever, to support utility for CLAN-A. Each of these utilities lacks any specific or substantial utility apart from the protein encoded by the nucleic acid itself. That is, without any direct knowledge of a use of the protein, there is no specific or substantial use for the nucleic acids which are being claimed.

In view of the recent decision, In re Fisher 04-1465, however, a few additional comments are warranted. Where Applicant argues a proposed utility that itself lacks any specific or substantial utility and which is not demonstrated, this represents an

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argument similar to one rejected by the Federal Circuit in Fisher. The Fisher appellant argued that EST expression during anthesis supported a finding of utility since the protein would be expressed. The Federal Circuit rejected this argument at page 15 of the decision (as posted on the Federal Circuit Web site), noting that no evidence of the claimed expression, which was shared in common with 2000 molecules, was provided in the specification. That is virtually identical to the current case, where Applicant argues that the presence of a CARD domain provides utility for the nucleic acid, without any evidence that of the function or use of the protein which contains the CARD domain. This CARD domain is shared in common with many different molecules and no evidence whatsoever was presented that regarding the function of the claimed molecule, only speculation on the activity relative to several dozen known human CARD domain containing proteins.

The Federal Circuit then cited the Kirk decision,

**"We do not believe that it was the intention of the statutes to require the Patent Office, the courts, or the public to play the sort of guessing game that might be involved if an applicant could satisfy the requirements of the statutes by indicating the usefulness of a claimed compound in terms of possible use so general as to be meaningless and then, after his research or that of his competitors has definitely ascertained an actual use for the compound, adducing evidence intended to show that a particular specific use would have been obvious to men skilled in the particular art to which this use relates."**

376 F.2d at 942 (emphasis added).

Further, the Federal Circuit commented that Fisher failed to provide any evidence – test data, declaration, deposition testimony or otherwise – to support the uses argued as presently beneficial and practical. This same fact pattern applies to the current case. There is no test data, declaration, deposition testimony or any other evidence which

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supports any particular specific and substantial use. The only evidence of record, the post filing date art, supports the conclusion that "the physiological functions of the isoforms of CLAN remain to be delineated" (see Damiano).

### **Enablement**

Applicant then argues the enablement rejection. While many of the same arguments discussed above apply to the enablement rejection, Applicant makes some further statements which are not found persuasive.

Applicant argues that it is irrelevant that Damiano teaches that the functions of the CLAN proteins was unknown at a time post filing and that no particular use was disclosed for these proteins. This is incorrect. It is significant that even after the filing date of the current application, the art (and in particular the applicant), had no idea of how to use the claimed molecules.

When Applicant argues that implicitly a therapeutic use for the nucleic acids is being required, that is simply not true. What is required is a use, and no such use is provided. If Applicant could show that, for example, that the CLAN-A nucleic acid was diagnostic of something, expressed a protein that itself had utility, or show any specific and substantial utility whatsoever, that would be adequate. However, no such utility is provided.

Applicant does not significantly rebut any of the determinations made with regard to the Wands factors. When Applicant concludes that there must be a patentable utility enabled by the specification, that is correct, but no such utility is present in the

specification and there is no such utility cited. Therefore, the conclusion that the claims lack enablement is maintained.

### ***Conclusion***

7. All claims are drawn to the same invention claimed in the application prior to the entry of the submission under 37 CFR 1.114 and could have been finally rejected on the grounds and art of record in the next Office action if they had been entered in the application prior to entry under 37 CFR 1.114. Accordingly, **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL** even though it is a first action after the filing of a request for continued examination and the submission under 37 CFR 1.114. See MPEP § 706.07(b). Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).


A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the mailing date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Jeffrey Fredman whose telephone number is (571)272-0742. The examiner can normally be reached on 6:30-3:00.

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If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Gary Benzion can be reached on (571)272-0782. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

  
Jeffrey Fredman  
Primary Examiner  
Art Unit 1637

2/14/05